

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Water Rights Bureau

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

**Part I. Proposed Action Description**

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Holman Ranch LLC  
2007 Alkali Creek Rd  
Billings, MT 59105-1925
2. Type of action: Change Application for Additional Stock Tanks 43Q 30151011
3. Water source name: Alkali Creek
4. Location affected by project: Section 7, T1N, R26E
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

Statement of Claim 43Q 30864-00 is for livestock direct from source from Alkali Creek in the SWSW Section 7, T1N, R26E and the NWNW Section 18, T1N, R26E. The Applicant is proposing to add a 3 stock tanks to this water right for pasture management. The proposed point of diversion for the stock tank system will be in the SESWSW (Govt Lot 4) in Section 7, T1N, R26E, Yellowstone County. Water will be diverted from the creek via a solar pump at a rate up to 22 GPM and conveyed through 2-inch poly piping to a primary stock tank with a capacity of approximately 300 gallons. From this tank, two additional sections of pipeline are proposed carry water to secondary stock tanks, one approximately 300 gallons and one approximately 150 gallons. The tanks will be equipped with float/shut off valves. The proposed stock tank places of use will be as follows:

- 1) SENWSW Section 7, T1N, R26E, Yellowstone County (Govt Lot 3)-primary
- 2) NWNWSW Section 7, T1N, R26E, Yellowstone County (Govt Lot 3)-secondary
- 3) NESESW Section 7, T1N, R26E, Yellowstone County-secondary

The change proposal keeps the historical livestock direct from source points of diversion and places of use on Alkali Creek. The project will improve grazing practices and reduce impact to the streambank as stock will be able to drink from tanks away from the creek. No additional flow rate or volume are requested through this change application. The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program  
Montana Natural Heritage Program  
United States Natural Resource Conservation Service  
United State Fish and Wildlife Service

## **Part II. Environmental Review**

### **1. Environmental Impact Checklist:**

<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>
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#### **WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION**

**Water quantity** – Alkali Creek is not included on the DFWP list of chronically or periodically dewatered streams. The proposed use will not increase the flow rate or volume of water already appropriated through Statement of Claim 43Q 30864-00 and will have no effect on water quantity.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Water quality** – The DEQ Water Quality report does not include Alkali Creek. The proposed plan to add stock tanks will not impair the water quality on this source. By allowing stock to get water without drinking directly out of the creek, it may improve water quality.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Groundwater** – The addition of stock tanks to this surface water right from Alkali Creek will not have an impact on groundwater.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**DIVERSION WORKS** - The existing water right 43Q 30864-00 is for livestock direct from source from Alkali Creek year-round for 27.5 animal units in the SWSW Section 7 and the NWNW Section 18, T1N, R26E. The proposed diversion system will consist of a solar pump capable of diverting up to 22 GPM from a point of diversion on Alkali Creek in the SESWSW (Govt Lot 4) in Section 7, T1N, R26E, Yellowstone County. Water pumped from the creek will be carried through 2-inch poly piping to the proposed primary stock tank located in the SENWSW Section 7, T1N, R26E with a capacity of approximately 300 gallons. From the primary tank, another section of pipeline will carry water to secondary stock tank located in the NESESW Section 7, T1N, R26E with a capacity of approximately 300 gallons. Another section of pipeline will carry water from the primary tank to a secondary tank located in the NWNWSW Section 7, T1N, R26E with a capacity of approximately 150 gallons. Each tank will be equipped with independent float/shut-off valves to prevent wasting of water. The addition of the pipeline and 3 stock tanks to the existing water right is not likely to cause any significant impact.

*Determination:* No significant impact

## **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**Endangered and threatened species** – According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program, there are 19 animal species of concern in the proposed project area. Animal species of concern include Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Spotted Bat, Hoary Bat, Little Brown Myotis, Great Blue Heron, Burrowing Owl, Veery, Greater Sage-Grouse, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo, Peregrine Falcon, Pinyon Jay, Spiny Softshell, Snapping Turtle, Plains Hog-nosed Snake, Western Milksnake, Greater Short-horned Lizard, Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, and Sauger. The Bald Eagle is listed as a special status species. The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists one plant species of concern: Bractless Hedge-hyssop. According to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Map, this project is within general sage grouse habit. The project is consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy according to a letter from Carolyn Sime, Project Manager, dated April 27, 2021. The proposed project is consistent with the current range and agricultural use of land in the area and is not likely to impact threatened or endangered species or create barriers to migration or movement of fish or wildlife.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Wetlands** – There are no wetlands in the proposed project area.

*Determination:* No impact

**Ponds** – There are no ponds associated with the proposed project.

*Determination:* No impact

**GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE** – According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the predominant soil types in the project area are Lavina loam, 2 to 4 percent slopes, Blacksheep, dry-Cabbart, dry-Rock outcrop complex, 8 to 60 percent slopes, Blacksheep-Twilight complex, 4 to 25 percent slopes, and McRae-Bainville loams, 7 to 15 percent slopes. These soil types are well drained and nonsaline to slightly saline. The addition of stock tanks on these soils is unlikely to cause any impact on soil quality or stability.

*Determination:* No significant impact.

**VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS** – Existing vegetative cover in the area is rangeland. The addition of stock tanks will improve range management and reduce impact to the streambank caused by stock drinking directly from the creek. The installation of pipelines and tanks may contribute to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds. It is the responsibility of the property owner to monitor for and implement measures for noxious weed control.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**AIR QUALITY** – The use of water from a developed spring for stock purposes will not impact air quality.

*Determination:* No impact

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES** – NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.

*Determination:* Not applicable

**DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY** - No additional demands on environmental resources are recognized.

*Determination:* No impact

## **HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS** – There are no known locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

*Determination:* Not applicable

**ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES** – The proposed project is located on privately owned agricultural land. The project will not impact access to recreational or wilderness activities.

*Determination:* No impact

**HUMAN HEALTH** – No impacts to human health have been identified for the proposed irrigation project.

*Determination:* No impact

**PRIVATE PROPERTY** - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

*Yes\_\_\_ No\_x\_\_\_ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

*Determination:* No impact

**OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

*Impacts on:*

(a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No significant impact

(b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No significant impact

- (c) Existing land uses? No significant impact
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No significant impact
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No significant impact
- (f) Demands for government services? No significant impact
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No significant impact
- (h) Utilities? No significant impact
- (i) Transportation? No significant impact
- (j) Safety? No significant impact
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No significant impact

**2. *Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts are recognized

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts are recognized

**3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:* None**

**4. *Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** The alternative to the proposed project is the no action alternative. The no action alternative prevents the property owner from improving range management practices and reducing impacts of stock to the creek. The no action alternative does not prevent or mitigate any significant environmental impacts.

**PART III. Conclusion**

**1. *Preferred Alternative:*** Issue the change authorization if the applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

**2 *Comments and Responses:*** None

**3. *Finding:***  
Yes\_\_ No\_x *Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

There are no significant impacts associated with the project so an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

*Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:*

*Name:* Jill Lippard  
*Title:* Water Resource Specialist  
*Date:* 05/19/2021